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Soviet Military Planning: Origins and Outlines of a Five-Year Defense Plan

The Soviet defense effort is managed on the basis of a five-year defense plan, which provides basic guidelines for weapons development and procurement, military construction, and the operations of the Ministry of Defense.

The defense plan is drafted by the General Staff on the basis of requests from the five branches of the Soviet Armed Forces. After approval by the military, the defense plan is correlated with the plans developed by the industrial ministries involved in defense production and is integrated with the national economic plan drafted by the State Planning Committee.

Current Soviet efforts in the development and deployment of weapon systems, and logical extrapolation from estimated Soviet defense requirements, provide a basis for identifying military programs likely to be included in defense planning for the 1973-1977 period. An examination of the programs within this projection indicates that all five branches of the Soviet Armed Forces will receive the resources needed to maintain their current mission assignments over the next five years. The branches apparently will not fare equally well, however.

- The SRF (Strategic Rocket Forces) currently is experiencing a reduction in procurement following the rapid expansion of the ICBM force in the late Sixties, but probably will benefit in the next few years from a major force modernization effort.
- The Navy probably will continue to enjoy a period of unprecedented prosperity. It will continue to develop and acquire improved general purpose surface combatants, submarines, and aircraft, and it could challenge the primacy of the SRF within the strategic attack mission.
- The Air Forces should be able to hold their own over the next five years as new aircraft are procured for all assigned missions and older models are retired.
- National Air Defense (PVO Strany) faces the most uncertain fate of all the services because of the ABM limitations included in the SAL agreements and the winding-down of surface-to-air missile programs.
- The Ground Forces appear likely to maintain their current numerical strength and to continue to receive a steady flow of modern weapons.

These projected military programs can be sustained over the next few years with only a modest increase in the level of Soviet defense expenditures. After 1975, however, annual increases are likely to be somewhat larger.

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